

REMARKS

Claims 3, 5-11, 14-18 and 20-23 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 11 and 20-22 are amended, claim 23 is added, and claims 12-13 and 19 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Favorable reconsideration in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Pending Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

A. Claims 3, 7, 11, 12, 14, 19 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 4,907,769 to Hunley, Jr. et al. ("Hunley"). This rejection is moot, because independent claim 11 has been amended to incorporate the features of former claim 13, which was not rejected under §102; claim 19 is canceled; and the remaining claims rejected under this section depend from an allowable base claim. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

B. The Office Action rejects claims 3, 7-9 and 11-14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the prior art disclosed by Applicant in Figs. 6A-6B ("PA") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,509,524 to Gretz. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action recognizes that PA does not disclose perpendicular slide passages for receiving the bolts, but asserts that Gretz discloses such a feature, and that it would have been obvious to combine the teaching of Gretz with the PA device. Applicant respectfully disagrees that it would have been obvious to combine the references.

Gretz discloses a slot orientation that appears to be similar to some respects to the slide passages disclosed by Applicant and recited in claim 11. However, the slots disclosed by Gretz are in a context that is very different from what is disclosed as PA. Specifically, the Gretz slot configuration is in the context of a wiring box and mounting block assembly for a household fixture such as a ceiling fan, light fixture or the like. When making connections between wire ends within such a box, the wiring connections are typically made outside the

box (e.g., using wire nuts or the like), and then the connected ends are pushed back up inside the box, and the cover plate is installed.

Installation of the cover plate in such an environment is somewhat difficult, for two reasons. First, the installation is typically overhead, which makes it difficult for the installation technician to work (because the arms tire easily when held overhead to manipulate a screwdriver). Second, because the wires inside the box sometimes tend to flex outward against the cover plate, it can be difficult to hold the cover plate in place and simultaneously insert screws through the plate and into the screw-receiving holes in the box.

Therefore, it is recognized in the context disclosed by Gretz that it is useful to have a slot configuration as shown by Gretz, so that the screws may be inserted beforehand, then the cover plate slid onto the screws using both hands, and then the cover plate may be held in place by the slotted tabs engaged with the screw heads while the technician tightens the screws using a screwdriver.

In summary, the problem of bent wires pushing outward from the inside of the box, and/or the problem of having one's arms tire while manipulating a screwdriver overhead, make it obviously useful to have the slot configuration of Gretz in the context of a household wiring box.

In contrast, the junction box disclosed as PA shown in Fig. 6 of this application does not have the problem of bent wires pushing out against a cover plate from inside of the box. Rather, the junction box accommodates stacked-up printed circuit boards or the like, which do not push outward on the cover. Additionally, the installation is not an overhead installation. Therefore, it is not readily apparent that the slot configuration disclosed by the Applicant would provide any particular advantage in the context of the PA junction box.

Applicant has invented the slide passage configuration recited in claim 11 for a different reason (e.g., to require less working space in front of the junction box for mounting

the junction box). There is no recognition, by either PA or Gretz, of such an advantage in the context of a junction box.

The recognition of this advantage in this context by Applicant, combined with (a) the disclosure of this advantage in Applicant's specification and (b) the absence of any such recognition in the applied prior art, are strong evidence that the rejection of claim 11 (former claim 13) relies impermissibly on hindsight knowledge gained from Applicant's disclosure.

C. The Office Action rejects claims 5, 6, 10 and 15-22 over PA and Gretz, further in view of other references. However, these other references do not overcome the above-noted deficiency of PA and Gretz with respect to claim 11. Further, independent claims 15, 17, 21 and 22 recite slide passage configurations which the Examiner acknowledges are not disclosed by PA, but asserts are disclosed by Gretz. For the same reasons discussed above, the use of Gretz's disclosed slot configurations in the context disclosed by Gretz would not have made it obvious to use those same configurations in the context of the PA junction box.

* * *

For at least the reasons discussed above, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims are patentably distinct from the applied prior art. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

For at least the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims define patentable subject matter and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

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